

Trump administration halts research grants at Princeton University

BY COLLIN BINKLEY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has halted dozens of research grants at Princeton University, the latest Ivy League school to see its federal money threatened in a pressure campaign targeting the nation's top universities.

Princeton was notified this week that several dozen federal grants are being suspended by agencies including the Department of Energy, NASA and the Defense Department, according to a campus message sent Tuesday by Christopher Eisgruber, the university's president.

Eisgruber said the rationale was not fully clear but that Princeton will comply with the law. The school is among dozens facing federal investigations into antisemitism following a wave of pro-Palestinian protests last year.

"We are committed to fighting antisemitism and all forms of discrimination, and we will cooperate with the government in combating antisemitism," Eisgruber wrote. "Princeton will also vigorously defend academic freedom and the due process rights of this University."

As President Donald Trump presses his political agenda on universities across the country, he has paid special attention to Ivy League institutions.

Columbia University was the first one targeted, losing \$400 million in federal money with threats to terminate more if it didn't make the campus safer for Jewish students. The



AP Photo/Ted Shaffrey

The Princeton University campus is in Princeton, N.J., Oct. 8, 2024.

school agreed to several demands from the government last month, including an overhaul of student discipline rules and a review of the school's Middle East studies department.

The government later suspended about \$175 million in federal funding for the University of Pennsylvania over a transgender swimmer who previously competed for the school. On Monday, a federal antisemitism task force said it was reviewing almost \$9 billion in federal grants and contracts at Harvard University amid an investigation into campus antisemitism.

The pressure has created a dilemma for U.S. colleges, which rely on

federal research funding as a major source of revenue.

Eisgruber came forward as a voice of opposition as the Trump administration ratcheted up pressure on Columbia, calling it the greatest threat to American universities in decades.

"The attack on Columbia is a radical threat to scholarly excellence and to America's leadership in research," Eisgruber wrote in a March 19 essay in *The Atlantic* magazine. "Universities and their leaders should speak up and litigate forcefully to protect their rights."

The Energy Department confirmed it had paused funding to Princeton pending a Depart-

ment of Education investigation around antisemitic harassment. The Education and Justice departments declined to comment.

Princeton was among 60 universities that received a warning letter from the Education Department in March over accusations of antisemitism. It said the schools could face enforcement action if they didn't address anti-Jewish bias on campus. All but two Ivy League schools, Penn and Dartmouth, were on the list.

The Education Department launched an investigation at Princeton in April 2024 under the Biden administration. It was in response to a

complaint filed by the editor-in-chief of *Campus Reform*, a conservative news organization, the outlet reported. The complaint cited a pro-Palestinian protest that reportedly included chants of "Intifada" and others described as antisemitic.

The outlet's editor has filed dozens of other antisemitism complaints with the Education Department.

The Trump administration has promised a more aggressive approach against campus antisemitism, accusing former President Joe Biden of letting schools off the hook. It has opened new investigations at colleges and detained and deported

several foreign students with ties to pro-Palestinian protests.

Trump and other officials have accused the protesters of being "pro-Hamas." Student activists say they oppose Israel's military activity in Gaza.

It follows a campaign by Republican in Congress who demanded answers from university leaders after the wave of protests. A series of hearings on Capitol Hill contributed to the resignation of presidents at Harvard, Columbia and Penn.

Columbia's interim president, Katrina Armstrong, resigned last week after the school agreed to the government's demands.

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employees whose positions were funded by recently terminated federal grants. The state agency also said about 300 more workers were at risk of having their positions eliminated, and that it had rescinded job offers to nearly 20 people.

The agency said the layoffs and separations are a direct consequence

of the federal government's cutting more than \$220 million in previously approved funding.

"We are working now to figure out how much of this critical public health work we can save and continue," Minnesota Health Commissioner Brooke Cunningham said in a statement. "The sudden and unexpected action from the federal government left us with no choice but to proceed with layoffs immediately."

California could lose almost \$1 billion, according to a statement from state Attorney General Rob Bonta's office. That money supports a number of public health initiatives, including substance use disorder prevention programs, vaccination efforts and bird flu prevention.

Health officials in North Carolina, which joined the lawsuit, estimate the state could lose \$230 million, harming dozens of local health departments,

hospital systems, universities and rural health centers. At least 80 government jobs and dozens of contractors would be affected, according to state health officials.

"There are legal ways to improve how tax dollars are used, but this wasn't one of them," North Carolina Attorney General Jeff Jackson said. "Immediately halting critical health care programs across the state without legal authority isn't just wrong

— it puts lives at risk."

Already, more than two dozen COVID-related research grants funded by the National Institutes of Health have been cancelled.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data from March shows that COVID-19 killed 411 people each week on average, even though the federal public health emergency has ended.

Associated Press reporter Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis con-

tributed to this report.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

This story has been corrected to show that the amount of money that was cut was \$11 billion, not \$12 billion.

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Gerry K. Gilbert,
Office Manager
(p)527-3162 (f)527-4567
features@tribunecourier.com

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